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INFO RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 4712
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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

USDA FAS FOR OCRA/KUYPERS; OSTA/HAMILTON, BEAN;
ONA/TING, SALLYARDS, MURPHY
PASS FSIS DUTROW, HARRIES
PASS APHIS MITCHELL
STATE FOR EUR/RUS
STATE PASS USTR FOR CHATTIN, MURPHY, HAFNER
BRUSSELS PASS APHIS/FERNANDEZ
VIENNA PASS APHIS/TANAKA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: EAGR ETRD ECON WTO RS
SUBJECT: MORE AUDITS OF U.S. MEAT AND POULTRY
FACILITIES REQUESTED

REF: A) HANSEN/DUTROW EMAIL 1/28/09

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Russian Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) requested via official letter that the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) organize another joint audit of U.S. pork, beef, and poultry facilities that are eligible to export to Russia beginning March 1, 2009. In addition VPSS implies that the current lists of U.S. meat and poultry facilities lack credibility as over half of them were delisted during the previous audits for non-compliance. As a result, VPSS wants FSIS to review and provide new lists of facilities that, according to them, are actually capable of meeting all Russian veterinary requirements. The original scanned copy of the letter and courtesy translation were sent to FAS/FSIS on January 28, 2009 (REF A). An informal embassy translation of the letter follows. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) BEGIN TEXT:
Moscow, January 28, 2009
No. FS-NV-2/506

Assistant Administrator
Office of International Affairs
USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
Dr. Ronald K. Jones

The Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) extends its regards to the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and informs you of the following.

The results of the 2008 joint audits of U.S. meat and poultry processing establishments that export to the Russian Federation showed that more than 50 percent of the establishments visited did not comply with Russian veterinary and sanitary requirements and norms.

In this connection, VPSS considers it necessary for FSIS to carefully review and fix the lists of

U.S. meat-processing establishments that actually meet Russian requirements and send them to our address before April 1, 2009.

In addition we also consider it necessary for FSIS to organize a joint inspection of U.S. pork, beef and poultry meat processing establishments that are eligible for export to Russia starting March 1, 2009.

Dr. Jones, let me assure you of my highest esteem.

Deputy Head
N.A. Vlasov
END TEXT.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: Over the last 6 months, VPSS has really ratcheted up its attacks on U.S. meat and poultry exports to Russia highlighting that the protectionist elements within the Ministry of Agriculture are intent on not only protecting the domestic agriculture sector but also delaying or derailing Russia's WTO accession. If FSIS were to agree to another round of audits of U.S. meat and poultry facilities as is requested in the letter, the result would likely lead to even more delistings. Post strongly urges FSIS and FAS to collaboratively develop a speedy response and advise VPSS that more time is needed to discuss this possibility with industry representatives before a decision can be made. Failure to respond by the end of February will likely lead

to retaliatory action by VPSS including further delistings of U.S. meat and poultry facilities.

END COMMENT.

BEYRLE